

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY AF/MLGARRISON:WLK

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S/S-MR BRIDGES

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR ARMSTRONG AND SCRANTON ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT GENEVA 9066 ACTION SECSTATE 15 NOV 76

QUOTE SECRET GENEVA 9066

NODIS

FOR SCHAUFELE FROM WISNER

DEPT PASS LONDON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR RH UK

SUBJECT: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: INDEPENDENCE DATE PLENARY SESSION

1. THE PLENARY SESSION WHICH THE BRITISH CALLED TO
DISCUSS THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE ADJOURNED AFTER LESS
THAN 20 MINUTES OF DELIBERATIONS. IVOR RICHARD READ THE
CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT AND INVITED EACH DELEGATION TO
COMMENT.

2. THE BRITISH REPORT THAT THE MEETING WENT AS SMOOTHLY

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AS COULD BE EXPECTED. NUZOREWA CAUGHT THE CONFERENCE'S

ATTENTION BY SUGGESTING QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY
SEPTEMBER 12, 1977 BE SELECTED AS THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE
ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD BE THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE YOUTH LEAGUE INTO THE NEW
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS. IT WOULD ALSO BE THE 77TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DATE "THE SO-CALLED PIONEERS
HOISTED THE UNION JACK IN SALISBURY." MUZOREWA
HOWEVER WENT ON TO SAY THAT "FOR THE FACT OF ZIMBABWE'S
LIBERATION AND FREEDOM, MY DELEGATION DESIRES THAT THE
CONFERENCE SHOULD NOW MOVE TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIAL
MATTERS AND IN PARTICULAR THE STRUCTURE OF AN
INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THE FORMATION OF WHICH WE CONSIDER
A MATTER OF URGENCY."

3. VAN DER BYL, ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH, MADE A
HELPFUL STATEMENT. HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY REFER TO
23 MONTHS, BUT SAID THAT IN THE RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT'S
VIEW THE PROCESSES WOULD TAKE SOMEWHAT LONGER THAN THE
BRITISH THOUGHT WAS POSSIBLE. IF THE PROCESSES COULD
BE COMPLETED AT AN EARLIER DATE, THE RHODESIANS WOULD
NOT OBJECT. HE ALSO SAID "WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO
HELP COMPLETE THEM AICKLY AS POSSIBLE."

4. SITHOLE STOOD BY 12 MONTHS BUT SUGGESTED THE
CONFERENCE MOVE ON TO A DISCUSSION OF THE INTERIM
GOVERNMENT.

5. THE POPULAR FRONT DELEGATIONS ASKED FOR A "SHORT"
ADJOURNMENT TO CONSIDER THE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT.
RICHARD AGREED AND THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD
BEGIN BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS. DURING THESE BILATERAL
CONSULTATIONS HE INTENDED TO CONSULT ON THE QUESTION
OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. HE PHRASED HIS REMARKS CAREFULLY
IN ORDER TO LEAVE SOME AMBIGUITY AND THEREBY PERMIT ANY
DELEGATION THAT WISHES TO TALK ABOUT INDEPENDENCE DATES
TO DO SO.

6. RICHARD WILL SEND LETTERS TO EACH DELEGATION
REQUESTING APPOINTMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS AND PLANS
TO GIVE MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE A HALF DAY EACH
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TO DISCUSS THEIR IDEAS ON THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WITH HIM.

7. MUGABE AND NKOMO STAYED BEHIND AT THE PALAIS AND
HAVE NOT YET MADE A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS.

8. THE BRITISH PLAN TO LET THE PATRIOTIC FRONT
STEW IN ITS OWN JUICE. THE BRITISH HOPE THAT THERE MAY
NEVER BE A NEW PLENARY SESSION ON THE SUBJECT OF THE IN-

DEPENDENCE DATE. INSTEAD, CONSULTATIONS ON THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT WOULD GRADUALLY TAKE HOLD AND THE ISSUE OF THE DATE WOULD BE DROPPED. THE OBSERVERS HAVE TOLD RICHARD THEY BELIEVE THIS IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY AND ONE WHICH SAVES NKOMO'S AND MUGABE'S FACE. BRITISH REMARKED THAT NKOMO LOOKED VERY UNEASY THROUGHOUT THE MEETING, PARTICULARLY SINCE MUZOREWA SEEMED TO BE MAKING THE BEST DEBATING POINTS.

9. COMMENT: THE BRITISH FEEL THAT THE WORST IS OVER. NKOMO AND MUGABE HAVE A WAY OUT. THEIR PERFORMANCE DURING THE PLENARY SESSION WAS QUIET AND UNCONTENTIOUS. THERE REMAINS, NEVERTHELESS, A POSSIBILITY THAT THE UNEASY COMPROMISE WILL FALL APART.

10. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT NKOMO AND MUGABE HAVE LEFT THE PALAIS. THEY MADE NO SIGNIFICANT NOR INFLAMMATORY STATEMENT TO THE PRESS. ABRAMS UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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